

## Nine Short Stories

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### A Piece of Candy

One warm day in spring, a traveler boarded a ferryboat with her two little girls. Just when the boat began to move, there came a voice from the bank: "Hey! Wait a minute!" Waving his hand, a samurai came running toward the boat. He jumped into the ferry.

The boat left the shore. The samurai sat like a king in the middle of the boat. As it was nice and warm, he soon began to doze off. The children giggled to see the strong-looking samurai with dark mustaches nodding sleepily.

The mother, afraid to make the samurai angry, put her finger to her lips saying, "Keep quiet." The girls became silent.

After a while, one of the girls stretched out her hand and said, "Give me a candy, mommy." Then the other said, "Me too, mommy." The mother took a paper bag out of her sleeve, but there was only one piece of candy left in the bag.

"Give it to me!" one child said.

"Give it to me!" said the other.

The mother didn't know what to do. "Just wait, my good daughters," she pleaded. "I'll buy some for both of you when we are on the shore." But the children did not stop asking for the piece of candy.

The samurai, who seemed to have been dozing, opened his eyes suddenly and watched the girls begging for candy. The mother, startled, thought the samurai must be angry because her children had disturbed his sleep.

"Do be quiet," begged the mother in vain. The girls would not obey her. Just then, the samurai drew his sword and came over to them. The mother, turning pale, covered her children with her own body. She thought the samurai would kill them with his sword because he had been woken up.

"Hand me the candy," commanded the samurai. Trembling with fear, the mother handed it to him. The samurai put it on the gunwale of the boat and cut it into two pieces.

"Here you are," said the samurai, giving each girl a piece of candy. Then he went back to his seat and began to nod off again.

### The Shadow

The moon shone down from directly above. Shadows of trees grew dark, and the roof became as bright as a mirror.

From a tree branch, something fell down slowly. It was a crow that had been sleeping on the branch. When the crow stood on the earth, he opened his eyes wide in surprise. He saw a clear black shadow below him. He had never seen such a clear shadow. It looked as if it were alive.

"Caw, caw," said the crow to his own shadow. But the shadow said nothing at all. It opened its mouth as if it were saying, "Yes, yes."

"Are you alive?" asked the crow.

"I am alive." The shadow opened its mouth in answer.

"Well, then you can fly?" asked the crow again.

The shadow seemed to answer, "No, but I can run."

"Oh, you can run?" said the crow. "Then let's run a race. I'll fly in the sky. You run on the earth. All right? See that small forest in front of the hill? That is the goal."

The shadow appeared to say something, but the crow, without paying any attention to it, got ready to fly. But, look! The shadow was ready to run, too.

When the crow looked down from the sky, he saw the black shadow running over the fields like a leaf on waves. It was running very fast. The



crow tried to fly as fast as he could so as not to lose the race. How strange! The shadow was running almost as fast as the crow. The crow was afraid of falling behind the shadow and moved his wings in a frantic way. But the shadow also ran frantically fast.



At last the crow could fly no longer and fell fluttering on the finishing spot just like a worn-out black glove. Then he found that the shadow had also reached the same spot at the same time.

The crow, out of breath, said: "We got here at the same time." The shadow, with his mouth open in anguish, seemed to say: "We got here at the same time."

The next morning a woodcutter found a crow lying dead on the grass near the forest.

### The Sold Pair of Shoes

Hyosuke, an apprentice shoemaker, made a pair of shoes for the first time. One day, a traveler bought the shoes. Hyosuke could not help feeling happy because his first shoes were sold.

"Excuse me, sir," said Hyosuke to the traveler. "Let me give you this shoe polish and brush. Please take great care of the shoes."

The man was deeply impressed by the boy's words and left the shoe store.

After a while, Hyosuke ran straight up to the traveler. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "if the nail should come out of the sole, please put this in there." He took a nail from his pocket and handed it to the man.

After some time, Hyosuke began to follow the traveler again as if he remembered something important. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "take great care of the shoes, please."

The traveler got angry in the end and said: "Shut up, boy. It's none of your business how I wear these shoes of mine."

"I am sorry, sir," Hyosuke apologized. He stood still seeing the traveler off. Hyosuke wished those shoes would be taken great care of forever and ever.

### Miss Goose's Birthday

In the back garden of a farmer, there lived ducks, geese, guinea pigs, rabbits, skunks, and other animals.

One day every one of them was invited to Miss Goose's birthday party. All the guests were present, except Mr. Skunk. What should they do with him? They knew quite well that he was not a bad fellow at all. They were simply worried about his bad habit, which could not be mentioned in public. Well ... his habit was to blow big, ear-splitting farts. Mr. Skunk, however, would surely get angry if he were left out of the party. So Miss Rabbit went to see him.

"Today is Miss Goose's birthday. Come visit her if you like."

"Er ... okay."

"By the way, Mr. Skunk, I have a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"Excuse me for saying so, but don't break wind at the party, please."

Mr. Skunk, turning red with shame, answered, "No. I promise I won't."

Then he came to the party. There were a variety of good dishes: *okara* (left-over tofu), carrot ends, melon peelings, porridge made of rice and vegetables, and so on. Everybody ate their fill. Mr. Skunk enjoyed the

feast, too. All the members were satisfied with Mr. Skunk, who had not blown a single fart.

At last, however, something serious happened. All at once Mr. Skunk fainted. Now what would become of him? Dr. Guinea Pig lost no time in examining Mr. Skunk's swollen stomach.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the doctor, looking around at the worried faces. "This is just because Mr. Skunk has been too reserved to blow farts in your presence. There is only one way to get out of this trouble: we have to let him blow farts to his heart's content."

All the members looked at one another and sighed deeply. They thought they should not have invited Mr. Skunk after all. In the end, however, they felt relieved, knowing that he would get over his illness simply by blowing farts.

### The Two Frogs

A green frog came across a yellow frog in the middle of a field.

"Hey, you are yellow," said the green frog. "What a dirty color!"

"Why, you are green," said the yellow frog. "Do you think you are handsome?"

Nothing good could come out of their speaking in such a way.

Inevitably they got into a fight. The green frog jumped onto the yellow frog. He was good at jumping on others. The yellow frog, in turn, kicked up sand with his hind-legs, so the green frog had to keep wiping the sand out of his eyes.

At that moment a freezing wind sprang up. Both of the frogs remembered that winter would come pretty soon. Frogs have to spend the cold winter underground.

"Let's fight it out when spring comes back," said the green frog, and he hid himself under the ground.

"Don't forget what you said just now," replied the yellow frog, hiding himself under the ground too.

The cold winter came at last. The north wind blew and frost formed on the ground where the two frogs were sleeping.

And spring came back again. The frogs sleeping in the earth felt the coming of spring by the warmth of the ground on their backs. The green frog awoke first and put his head out in the air. No other frogs were out yet.

"Hey," he called to the yellow frog underground. "Wake up! It's spring now."

Then the yellow frog came out of the ground and said, "Ah, spring has come at last."

"Don't you remember our quarrel last year?" said the green frog.

"Wait a minute," said the yellow frog. "First of all, let's clean the mud off our bodies."

The two frogs went to a pond to clean their bodies. In the pond there was water gushing forth like fresh lemonade. With a splash they jumped into the water.

After washing his body, the green frog said with his eyes blinking. "Wow, how shining your yellow is!"

"Your green body is wonderful, too," said the yellow frog.

Then the two frogs said to each other, "Let's stop quarreling, shall we?"

After a good long sleep, frogs as well as people feel cheerful.



### The Little God Who Liked Children

There was once a little god who was fond of children. The little god always played with little birds and animals in the forest, singing songs and playing the flute. Sometimes he went down to a village and played with

children he liked very much. But this god had never shown himself, so the children caught no sight of him at all.

One night there was a big snowfall. The next morning when the children were playing on a white field, one of them said, "Let's print our faces on the snow." The thirteen children knelt down and pressed their round faces on the white snow. There appeared a line of round faces on the snow.

"One, two, three, four..., " counted one of the children.

How strange! There were fourteen images. How could it be possible that there were fourteen images though there were actually only thirteen children? The invisible god was beside the children as usual; he must have pressed his own face on the snow.

The mischievous children, winking at one another, decided to catch the little god.

"Let's play school."

"Yes, let's."

The brightest boy played the role of a teacher and the other twelve formed a line as pupils.

"Attention! Count off!" ordered the teacher.

"One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven. Twelve."

The twelve children finished calling out their numbers. Though there was to be nobody else, a voice was heard next to the twelfth child: "Thirteen." It was a clear, ringing voice.

Hearing the voice, the children shouted: "There he is! Get him." Quickly they gathered round the space next to the twelfth child.

The little god was frightened. Children being children, he didn't know what would happen to him once he got caught. Creeping between the legs of a tall boy, he ran back to the forest. But he was in such a hurry that he left one of his shoes behind. The children picked up the little red shoe from the snow. It was still warm.

"What a pretty little shoe!" said the children, laughing together.

Since then, the little god rarely came out of the forest. However, he was

so fond of children that he didn't stop calling out to them in the forest: "Hi! Hi!"

### The Red Candle

A monkey who went to the village for fun found a red candle on his way home to the mountain. The monkey mistook the candle for a firework; he had never seen a red candle before. With great care he brought it back to the mountain.

Animals in the mountain made a great uproar when they heard that the monkey had brought a piece of firework. No one had ever seen fireworks: no deer, no wild boars, no hares, no turtles, no weasels, no racoon dogs, or no foxes.

They pushed their way to have a look at the red candle.

"It's wonderful!"

"How beautiful!"

They exclaimed and looked at one another. Then the monkey said: "Watch out! It's dangerous. Don't be so close to it. It'll explode."

When they stood back in fear, the monkey explained to them what a big sound the firework would make as it was set off, and how beautifully it would open in the night sky. And they hoped they could look at such a splendid thing.

"Then why don't we shoot it tonight on the top of the mountain over there?" said the monkey.

All the animals were excited. Imagining the firework scatter like stars in the night sky, they got enthralled.

Now the night fell. They came to the top of the mountain with their hearts pounding fast. The monkey was waiting for them. He had already tied the red candle to the branch of a tree.

At last the time came when they would set off the firework. But there arose a problem — nobody dared to light the firework. Everybody was eager to see it open like a flower, but nobody wanted to light it. There



could be no display of fireworks at all.

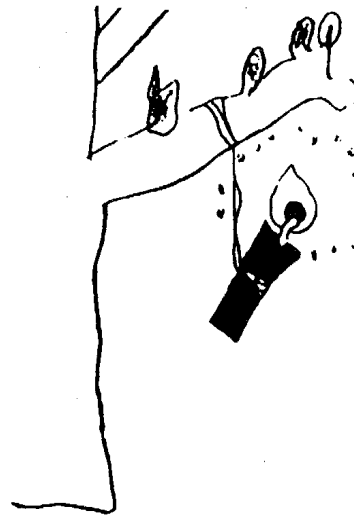
Finally they decided to have a lottery so that they could choose someone who should light the firework.

The lot fell upon the turtle. He plucked up his courage to walk toward the firework. Do you think he could do it? No, he couldn't. When he came up to the candle, he ducked his head.

The next lot named the weasel. He was a little better than the turtle, for he did not duck his head. But he was so near-sighted that he did nothing but trot around the candle.

In the end, the wild boar dashed out. She was such a brave beast that she went up to the candle and lit it up. In surprise, all the animals jumped back into the bush and covered their ears. Besides they closed their eyes.

The candle, however, made no sound at all — it flickered quietly.



### The Coming Young Sparrows

The sparrow had a numb leg. When she was just learning to fly, a mischievous child caught her and fastened one of her legs tight with a string. The poor sparrow got injured in her feeble leg.

One day when wheat fields turned yellow, the lame sparrow laid three eggs in the eaves of a house. Feeling very happy, she held the three eggs in her bosom.

A busy bee came flying toward the sparrow. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Sparrow," said the bee, looking into the nest in the eaves.

"I've laid some eggs," said the sparrow and pushed her eggs out from under her bosom.

"Oh, wonderful!" said the bee, "I'll give you good orange juice as a present when they are hatched." Then he said without any bad intention, "I hope you'll have no crippled young ones like you."

From that moment on, the sparrow began to be worried. With a deep sigh, she said to herself: "What shall I do if my young ones are crippled like me? What if my children are bullied just as I have been left alone by my fellow sparrows only because I have a numb leg?"

The sparrow was so worried that she lost her health; she was dazzled in the intense afternoon sunshine.

One morning the three eggs were broken from within and there appeared three young ones. But nobody knew whether they had numb legs or not, because they were little babies which had no wings or no sight.

Before long, however, they had their wings and firm bills. At last they learned how to fly in the air. Then the mother sparrow made each of her children fly down on the ground from the eaves. Getting on the ground, every young sparrow started walking about to find something to eat—without any trouble in their legs. From the nest downward, the mother sparrow watched them walking around. How relieved she was!

It was a bright afternoon and the wheat had just been harvested.

### The Snail's Sorrow

Once there was a snail. One day an important fact came to the snail's mind: "I haven't given much thought to it, but I wonder if the shell on my back is filled with sorrow."

What should he deal with this sorrow? He came to a friend of his and said, "I can't live any longer."

"Why not?" asked the friend.

"I'm so unhappy," said the poor snail. "The shell on my back is filled with sorrow."

Then his friend said to him, "You're not the only one. I carry a lot of sorrow on my back, too."

Thinking it would be no use talking with him, the snail called on another friend. Unexpectedly, however, the friend said to him, "You're not the only one. I carry a lot of sorrow on my back, too."

The poor snail visited still another friend. Furthermore, he visited his friends one after another, but they said just the same thing.

Finally the snail realized: "Everyone has his own sorrow. I'm not the only one. I have to bear my sorrow." Thereafter, this snail stopped feeling sorry for himself.

#### 付記

『校定・新美南吉全集』（大日本図書）より翻訳。ただし、「子供のすきな神様」は『新美南吉童話選集』（大日本図書）より翻訳。